

Burger Will Tell Congress What Laws Courts Need

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief Justice Warren E. Burger says he considers it part of his job to let Congress know what kind of legislation he thinks would be good for the courts.

Two former chief justices, William Howard Taft and Charles Evans Hughes, did the same sort of thing, Burger wrote in a newsletter distributed recently to all federal judges.

"My own concept of how this informational responsibility should most appropriately be carried out is far more restrained than was the case with Chief Justice Taft," Burger said.

"As the biographies of Taft show, he personally testified before congressional committees and frequently he visited with senators and congressmen in the Capitol, in their offices or in their homes to urge his views on them."

Burger went on:

"I intend to continue to stimulate interaction with members of the judiciary to develop consensus on what our needs are and to see that Congress and the public are informed on the problems of the courts."

Burger said a "totally false" news report that the judiciary was engaged in lobbying against pending legislation moved him to "put some perspectives on the larger question of relations between judiciary and the courts."

Federal laws require the administrative office of the federal courts, the federal judicial center and the chief justice to submit recommendations to Congress, Burger said.

During the past two decades, the administrative office proposed 203 bills, he added.

"Statutes, historic tradition and the logic of the situation require the federal judiciary, through its established organizations to work constantly for improved methods of providing justice and to advise the public and the other branches of government so that intelligent action can be taken," Burger wrote.

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In October, columnist Jack

Anderson wrote that Burger had sent Rowland Kirks, director of the administrative office, to the Capitol to lobby against pending product-safety legislation. Reporters asked for Burger's account.

A week later, in response to inquiries, the court's press office released a letter from Burger to House Speaker Carl Albert—(D-Okla.) denying that Kirks "had ever communicated with you purporting to express my views on any legislation or speaking in my name."

In his message in the Judicial Center's newsletter, Third Branch, Burger said the story "was picked up by other reporters who did not trouble to ascertain the facts." He called this "misinformed reporting."